

REMARKS

The official action of 11 January 2010 has been carefully considered and reconsideration of the application as amended is respectfully requested.

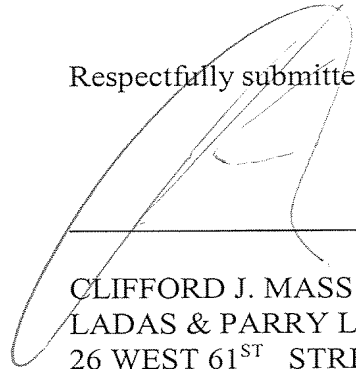
Claims 1-12 and 23 stand rejected under 35 USC 112, first paragraph, for alleged failure to comply with the written description requirement. The basis for this rejection is the Examiner's contention there is allegedly no support in the specification for the exclusion of steam. Nevertheless, the Examiner has courteously suggested that, if Applicants were positively to claim "an inert gas atmosphere", the rejection would be overcome on the basis of the use of inert gas in the Examples in the specification.

In accordance with the Examiner's suggestion, Applicants have now amended claim 1 positively to recite that the activation is carried out in an inert gas atmosphere. Since the Examples in the specification convey to those of skill in the art that Applicants had possession as of the application filing date of the subject matter now claimed (activation in an inert gas atmosphere), the amendment is respectfully believed to remove the basis for the rejection.

In view of the above, Applicants respectfully submit that the application is now in allowable form. An early notice of allowance is earnestly solicited and is believed to be fully warranted.

Please charge Account No.12-0425 for any fees which may be due by this
paper.

Respectfully submitted,



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